

HOW DO EUROPEANS DIFFER IN THEIR ATTITUDES TO IMMIGRATION ?

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ABSTRACT

This paper will provide an overview of how citizens in different European countries differ in their attitudes towards immigration. The primary focus will be on overall sympathy or hostility towards immigration (based perhaps on a scale deriving from questions B29-B31) rather than on more precise differences in attitudes towards particular types or groups of migrant or criteria for immigration. The main aim of the paper is to explore both within-country and between-country differences in attitudes, and the interaction between them. Thus we plan to explore how supportive or otherwise of immigration are people of different age, educational level, social class and migration background. Does the usual assumption that younger, highly-educated and economically secure individuals will be more supportive of immigration hold true, and that older, less-educated and economically vulnerable individuals are more opposed to immigration? Secondly, do we find that these patterns hold true with similar strength across Europe, or do we find that some countries (possibly western European ones such as Britain, France, Germany and the Netherlands) are more socially polarized in their attitudes, while others (possibly the Nordic countries) are more homogeneous around a relatively supportive average position, and perhaps yet others (possibly some Eastern European countries) are more homogeneous around a less supportive average? In the light of the findings with respect to our second question, we will consider how far we can characterize countries as being more or less supportive of immigration or whether it makes more sense to say that European elites are more or less uniformly supportive of immigration whereas it is among disadvantaged groups that the crossnational variation is most evident.

Keywords: Attitudes to immigration; social polarization; cross-national differences; demographic differences